

# Saint Joseph Parish

## Tuition Town Hall

With Saint Joseph School Parents

September 26 and October 3, 2019

### Summary

Presented by: Rev. Thomas Rozman, Pastor; Mrs. Rebecca Bamberger, Principal  
Mr. Rudy Geisler, Parish Manager; Mr. David Maceiko, Finance Administrator

Saint Joseph School is a Mission of Saint Joseph Parish, and is a parish ministry. The Mission Statement of Saint Joseph Parish is: **Like our Patron, Saint Joseph, the Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are called to foster the presence of Christ in all that we say and do. Our mission is to grow disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ.**

We ask all parents who entrust their children to Saint Joseph School to realize that they are in a Covenant Relationship with the parish. In this Covenant, parents have “expectations” of the school for their children, and the school and parish, in return, have “expectations” of the parents and students. This is explained clearly in the SJS Parent Handbook that every parent is given. The Handbook has been in existence for a number of years, is updated as needed, and is also available on the school website. For the purposes of the Tuition Town Hall, the following sections of the Handbook were highlighted:

From the School Handbook, page 2, parents can expect this from the School:

*Saint Joseph School, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, offers a quality Catholic, faith-based education to the children in the Diocese of Harrisburg. Our school program helps our children develop spiritually, intellectually, and physically so that they meet the challenges in their lives, applying Gospel values in our ever-changing society to become disciples for Christ.*

The School Handbook, on page 9, describes the expectations of the parents and students. All parents and students are expected to be “active parishioners”:

*Active Parishioners are people who participate fully in the life of their parishes, offering their time, talent, and treasure for the benefit of the People of God. This includes Mass attendance each Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation.*

Parents also pledge the following, as found in the Handbook, pages 12-13:

- *Ensure that we pray daily as a family and attend Mass as a family on weekends and Holy Days of Obligation. Families from non-Catholic faith traditions ...are likewise encouraged to participate fully in their faith tradition...*
- *Volunteer my time and talents to Saint Joseph School to the best of my ability...*
- *With the example of the Holy Family and the help of God, I will abide by this pledge of conduct while my child is enrolled at Saint Joseph School.*

Along with the expectations of attending Mass every weekend, the school requests volunteer service from the parents each year. A “VolunteerAsk” form was distributed to all in attendance. See that form attached to this document.

- Other volunteer opportunities at your parish can be found on one’s parish website. For Saint Joseph parishioners, please refer to [www.stjosephmech.org](http://www.stjosephmech.org). There are a number of activities in which the entire family can participate, in both the school and the parish.

The actual cost to educate each student this academic year is \$7,369. There is a gap between what the school charges for the first Catholic student (\$4,858) and the actual cost of education. The gap becomes wider when there is more than one student from the same family. For instance:

<u>Catholic Tuition</u>	<u>Tuition</u>		<u>Actual Cost to the School/Parish</u>	<u>Difference</u>
• First Child:	\$4,858	vs	\$7,369	\$2,511
• Second Child:	\$8,793		\$14,738	\$5,945
• Third Child:	\$12,192		\$22,107	\$9,915
• Fourth Child:	\$12,192		\$29,476	\$17,284
• Fifth Child:	\$12,192		\$36,845	\$24,653
Non-Catholic Tuition	\$7,324		\$7,369	\$45

The difference between the actual cost and the tuition charged must be made up somehow in order for the budget to balance. See below for the stakeholders who invest time, energy and money with this effort.

- **Parents:** Your share of the cost (“tuition”) and volunteer activity
- **Saint Joseph Parishioners:** We give 40 cents on each dollar collected in the Sunday collection to the Mission of Catholic Education (Saint Joseph School and Trinity High School). 40% is a great sacrifice for this parish, as there are many other ministries that also need funding.
- **Other Catholic Parishes:** offer assistance per student attending SJS
- **Students from other faith traditions:** They pay just about what it cost to educate a student
- **Organizations:** Scholarship assistance (Neumann, EITC, etc.)
- **Development Partners:** Those who contribute financially in supporting the school
- **Fundraising Partners:** Home and School Association and other school organizations

We took a look at what some area private schools cost, from information found on their websites. One can see how much more affordable Saint Joseph School is, compared to:

- Harrisburg Academy – Camp Hill: Sliding scale based on grade starting at \$18,000 (grades 1 – 4), \$19,980 (5-8) 21,000 (high school)
- West Shore Christian: \$7,165.00 – \$7,890.00

- St. Stephen Episcopal – Harrisburg: \$7,590.00
- Londonderry School – Hershey: \$8,700.00 (plus a supply fee of \$450.00)

**Financial Aid is Available**, and Mrs. Bamberger explained several options. First, she explained the Neumann Scholarship Foundation. In order for any other scholarship opportunities to be available to our students, they **MUST** first apply for a Neumann Scholarship. The deadline for documentation to be submitted each year is **April 1**. There are a number of other scholarships and assistance programs available. Please contact Mrs. Bamberger with any questions. A summary of her presentation on scholarships:

#### Neumann Scholarship

- April 1st deadline
- Must apply through FACTS (online)
- You must apply for Neumann first, in order to be eligible for other scholarship opportunities.

#### SJS Scholarship Program - Grocery Gift Card/Scrip Program

- Applications are sent out in April
- You must attach your current Federal Income Tax Form 1040.
- Recipient requirements include: attending Mass on weekends and Holy Days of Obligation, minimum purchase of \$200 per year in grocery/scrip gift cards, at least 10 hours of volunteer service to the school.
- Program has provided over \$100,000 in financial aid each year to our SJS families.

#### Additional Financial Aid Opportunities

- Central Pennsylvania Scholarship Fund - SPE program
- Bravo
- Bridge Foundation
- Tuition Angels & Private Donations

Saint Joseph is in a renewal process that we call:

### **PARISH TRANSFORMATION PROCESS “Growing Disciples for the Lord Jesus”**

The fruits of this process over the past years are:

- Children’s Liturgy of the Word at the 9:45 Mass, for our younger parishioners.
- Ministry of Hospitality – you are given a warm welcome as you come to Mass
- Coffee and donuts year-round
- Greeting each other before the opening hymn
- Music Ministry
  - Adult Choir
  - School Liturgy and Handbell Choirs
  - Cherub Choir
  - Praise and Worship Ensemble

There is a lot more going on here, and we invite you to experience it. Sunday Mass is not a “boring” experience at Saint Joseph’s!

**MOST OF ALL: We receive the Eucharist, the weekly food we need on our spiritual journey, especially when life gets tough.**

A question that Father Rozman posed to the assembled parents was: **Is Saint Joseph School part of your family’s Way of Life as a Catholic, or is it just another program to get through?** Saint Joseph School is not just any other private school. It is a Catholic School, that holds a Covenant with the parents and their children.

Saint Joseph Parish is very supportive of this mission of the parish, since 40% of our annual income is designated for Catholic education. But, a number of stakeholders – parishioners whose hard earned dollars in the collection basket help with keeping tuition costs at the school as low as they are - are starting to ask about the parish supporting other equally important ministries, such as the ever growing elderly population in Cumberland County.

Many of our parishioners on fixed incomes give a weekly contribution to the parish. Many school parents do not. And with the growing routine of students in all levels and their parents not attending Sunday Mass on a weekly basis, it is a fair question for these stakeholders to ask: Should less financial support be given to the school, and more financial support be given to other important ministries? This is a question that the parish will continue to discuss, especially if our parents and students at Saint Joseph School are not living out their part of the Covenant, as stated in the Handbook (based on what the parents promised God when they brought their children to the Church for Baptism). This Covenant can be summarized by living the areas of Stewardship: time (Mass attendance); talent (volunteer service); and treasure (tuition and the Sunday collection). Obviously, the result of not fulfilling this Covenant would be that tuition would have to be raised significantly in order for the school to meet budget.

We do not want to see anything but a strong present and future for our Catholic school, but this is now a call to all school parents to take a look at how they live out their Covenant with their school and parish. Are you giving especially of your time and talent to the school and parish, and are you offering your treasure through the weekly collection at Sunday Mass? Every registered family of every parish in the diocese receives collection envelopes, and most parishes offer the option of online giving.

A question was posed by one of the parents: “was this meeting meant to set the stage for a future increase in tuition costs?” The answer to that is not known at this time. Every year the parish evaluates the ever-increasing costs of running the school. If we find that Saint Joseph School is merely a program to get through and not a Way of Life for our Catholic families, then the parish will take a serious look at its financial support of the school, and respond as a responsible steward of the resources that all the stakeholders offer to the parish for all its important ministries.